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SUBJECT: SIERRA LEONE: TALKING POINTS FOR MAY 7 BRIEFING
AND CONSULTATIONS

1. USUN is instructed to draw from the following talking points for the May 7 UN Security Council briefing and consultation on Sierra Leone. Begin points:

-- The United States commends the work of UNIOSIL and the UN Country Team in Sierra Leone for all the support they have provided to the government and people of Sierra Leone in helping the nation transition into a stable, prosperous, democratic country.

-- We are pleased that UNIOSIL has kept firmly to the drawdown guidelines outlined in UNSCR 1793 and the Secretary General's letter to the President of the Security Council of January 31, 2008.

-- The United States thinks the UNIOSIL's intervention and subsequent drawdown can be a model for future peacekeeping missions.

-- We welcome the proposal of the Secretary General for a new mission to follow UNIOSIL when it ends its mandate in September 2008. The mandate is ambitious but correctly focuses on the key issues facing Sierra Leone. We have some questions regarding some aspects of the personnel and equipment needed for the follow-up mission, but hope to resolve these with the Secretariat and other Council members in the coming months.

-- We welcome the idea of co-location of the United Nations' political and development personnel, who would utilize the joint resources of the integrated office and the United Nations country team to implement the new mission's mandate. We would encourage further streamlining of UN equities in the country to produce the most efficient and cost effective mission possible.

-- The United States welcomes the adoption of the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework by the Government of Sierra Leone and the Peacebuilding Commission. We concur with the recommendation of the SYG that the follow-on mission to UNIOSIL should include a mandate to work with the Government of Sierra Leone to implement the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework. It is extremely important that this follow-on mission consult closely with the Peacebuilding Support Office, the UN country team, and other relevant stakeholders to maximize effective use of resources.

-- The United States thinks it is important the follow-on mission continue to provide logistical support to the Mongolian Guard Force protecting the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

-- The United States looks forward to the local elections in Sierra Leone scheduled for this July. We are pleased that all funds required for the local elections have been pledged or received from donors. We call on those who have pledged funds to fulfill their pledge as soon as possible. We thank

all those who have given generously so that this important benchmark in Sierra Leone's march to a stable democratic state can take place.

-- The United States commends the efforts of President Koroma to reach out to the political opposition, including holding meetings with the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) Minority Leader in Parliament, including SLPP members in his delegation for official visits abroad, and hosting reconciliation visits throughout the country. While the healing process has begun, we call on all parties to continue efforts at reconciliation and cooperation for the good of all the people of Sierra Leone.

-- We commend UNIOSIL and the international development community for their efforts in security sector reform. We are pleased with the progress of the Sierra Leone police force and are impressed efforts have progressed so much that 20 Sierra Leone police officers are now serving in UNAMID.

-- The United States welcomes the approval by the Government of Sierra Leone of the reduction of their armed forces from 10,500 to 8,500 to be completed by 2010. With the help of the United Nations and the international donor community this leaner force will be able to effectively serve the security needs of the people of Sierra Leone.

-- The United States is well aware that the significant increase in global food prices presents challenges for the economy of Sierra Leone, a country that imports 70% of its rice. As President Bush announced last week, he is asking the U.S. Congress to approve an additional \$770 million in funding for an integrated package of food aid to support emergency needs and development assistance to address the underlying causes of the world food crisis. If approved this would bring total U.S. food aid contributions to \$5 billion for 2008 and 2009.

-- The United States commends the Government of Sierra Leone for its efforts to reform its justice system, promote anti-corruption efforts, and increase human rights and the rule of law.

Questions for the briefer:

-- Will the SYG be announcing a new Executive Representative of the Secretary General to replace Victor Angelo before September? If not, the United States hopes that an ERSG can be announced as soon as a new force is approved by the Council. It is important this new mission have clear executive leadership from its inception.

-- What role, if any, does the Secretariat envision the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA) playing to support the follow on mission to UNIOSIL?

End points.
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